

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 00786 310127Z

14

ACTION SSM-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAB-01 IO-11 SAM-01 /075 W

----- 116414

R 301341Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9978

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0786

FOR SSM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, IS

SUBJECT: PRESS INTEREST IN SINAI FIELD MISSION

REF: (A) STATE 020380; (B) CAIRO 1200

1. ABOUT FORTY-FIVE AMERICAN AND OTHER FOREIGN MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES VISITED THE SINAI FIELD MISSION SITE JAN 29, IN RESPONSE TO THEIR INSISTENT REQUESTS. THEIR VISIT WAS A SUCCESS, WITH THE BRIEFING WELL HANDLED BY COL. LAYNE. EMBASSY PRESS OFFICER VOGEL ACCOMPANIED THE GROUP.

2. IT IS NOW EVIDENT THAT AMERICANS SERVING IN THE SINAI ARE AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE A SUBJECT OF INTEREST TO JOURNALISTS. THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE THE CASE ANYWHERE, BUT WITH A LARGE PERMANENT CORPS OF U.S. AND OTHER FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS STATIONED IN ISRAEL (NOT TO MENTION THE ITINERANTS) THE PROBLEM IS OF GREATER DIMENSION AND MORE IMMEDIATE. USIS OFFICERS IN TEL AVIV (AND PRESUMABLY ALSO IN CAIRO) HAVE HAD TO DEVOTE AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF TIME IN RECENT WEEKS IN CONNECTION WITH REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO THE SFM SITE AND ACTIVITIES. TRYING TO MAINTAIN THE STRUCTURES PLACED UPON THEM, THEY HAVE INCURRED THE NOT UNEXPECTED

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 00786 310127Z

WRATH OF THE CORRESPONDENTS, SOME OF WHOM, AS THE

DEPARTMENT KNOWS, HAVE TAKEN THE ISSUE UP AT A HIGH LEVEL IN THE U.S.

3. THE EMBASSY WILL, AS REQUESTED, CONTINUE TO FUNCTION IN A "LIGHTNING-ROD ROLE" IN REGARD TO PRESS REQUESTS FOR ACCESS TO THE SINAI MISSION AND FEELS, WITH DUE MODESTY, THAT ITS PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT IT IS WELL GROUNDED FOR THIS PURPOSE. HOWEVER, THIS IS AT BEST A STOPGAP ARRANGEMENT AND DECISIONS WILL SOON BE REQUIRED ON THE LONG-TERM HANDLING OF THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS ASPECTS OF THE SINAI MISSION. (IN THE BROADER SENSE, THIS WILL INCLUDE CONGRESSIONAL AND OTHER HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL INTEREST IN THE SITE AND IN THE PERSONNEL THERE.)

4. THE EMBASSY HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO EXTRICATE ITSELF FROM PRESS INQUIRIES ABOUT THE SFM, AND IT DOES NOT SEE MUCH POSSIBILITY OF DOING SO IN THE FUTURE. CORRESPONDENTS WHO WISH TO FIND OUT ABOUT AMERICANS IN THIS AREA NATURALLY TURN FIRST TO THE EMBASSY. EVEN IF THE EMBASSY REFERS ALL LEGITIMATE INQUIREERS TO THE SINAI FIELD MISSION DIRECTOR (WHO WILL BE PHYSICALLY LOCATED IN THE DESERT) IT IS LIKELY THAT THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE INQUIRER AND THE MISSION DIRECTOR WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT INDEED, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE. ONE SOLUTION WOULD BE TO HAVE A PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER ASSIGNED TO THE PROJECT, WITH PERHAPS DUAL HEADQUARTERS IN TEL AVIV AND CAIRO. ANOTHER SOLUTION WOULD BE TO WORK OUT AN AGREED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIELD MISSION DIRECTOR AND THE PRESS ATTACHES IN EMBASSIES CAIRO AND TEL AVIV, IN WHICH THE LATTER WOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE ROUTINE INQUIRIES, HELP WITH ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRIPS, ARRANGE INTERVIEWS, ETC.

5. RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON GIVE CONSIDERATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO THIS PROBLEM OF SFM PRESS RELATIONS, SINCE ALL SIGNS HERE ARE THAT THERE WILL BE CONTINUING MEDIA INTEREST IN THE SITE AND THE PERSONNEL. EMBASSY PLANS TO RAISE THE SUBJECT WITH THORNE DURING HIS VISIT NEXT WEEK.

6. CAIRO MAY WISH TO COMMENT ON ITS EXPERIENCES IN HANDLING

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 00786 310127Z

THE PRESS FOR SFM.  
DUNNIGAN

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## Message Attributes

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